



November 19, 1998

OST-98-4775-6

Mr. Leo Mullin, President and CEO
Delta Air Lines
1030 Delta Boulevard
Hartsfield-Atlanta International Airport
Atlanta, Ga 30320

Dear Mr. Mullin:

Our small travel agency has been one of the biggest supporters of Delta Air Lines. Just as you are a preferred carrier with us, we have been a preferred agency with you. We have sincerely believed that in recommending Delta to our clients, where fares and all other factors were the same, we have-served their needs well.

You can imagine our disappointment with your recent "kneejerk reaction" in capping international commissions to travel agencies. More disappointing was the fact that you did not even have the common courtesy of communicating this action to us as other airlines have.

You have indicated that by capping travel agent commissions, Delta will realize a savings of \$40-\$45 million annually. Do you intend to pass these savings on to the public by lowering fares? Since you did not reduce fares when you capped domestic commissions, that is doubtful. Instead, fares have gone up repeatedly over the last two years. Yes, travel agencies can now charge the public a "service fee" to replace the commissions, but the truth is that that represents another major fare increase to the public. While the rest of the country has been basking in the lowest inflation rates in decades, the travel industry has experienced the highest rate increase ever.

I suppose the traveling public could even accept this latest attack on travel agencies if the airlines were investing the savings in increasing service to replace them. But, again, the truth is that service levels have declined drastically over the past two years. We have heard it repeatedly from our clients; the Administration has heard it repeatedly; the Congress has heard it repeatedly. There is a pattern of callous disregard by the major airlines of the traveling public and travel agencies. It is a course which is going to be disastrous for the airline industry.

Travel agencies, mostly small businesses, entered into agreements with the airlines years ago and have been the backbone of any success you have had. They have saved you billions of dollars in personnel and other costs. They have increased the level of service you have been able to give the public. You have now arbitrarily violated those agreements repeatedly without due cause and due process.

It is indeed a sad day in the travel industry and a sad day for the traveling public. They soon will have no intermediaries to help them navigate the perilous waters created by you and the other airline sharks. But, I understand that is the ultimate objective of the major airlines.

Sincerely,

Melanie Gurisco Barton
Melanie Gurisco Barton, Owner

CC: President Bill Clinton
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500-0003

Mr. Rodney Slater
Secretary
Department of Transportation
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